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Venue : BANGKOK, THAILAND
Date : 5-6 AUGUST, 1999
**Title : CLOSING STATEMENT AT THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE
THAILAND-MALAYSIA JOINT COMMISSION FOR BILATERAL
COOPERATION**

His Excellency Dr. Surin Pitsuwan
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand;

Distinguished delegates;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

We have just successfully concluded the Eighth Joint Commission Meeting between our two countries. The congenial and expeditious manner in which we have been able to conduct our discussions is a clear manifestation of the resoluteness and commitment of both our delegates in working towards the strengthening and upgrading of bilateral relations between our two countries. As a result of the positive and constructive attitude that we have displayed in the last two days in dealing with the subject matters before us, we have been able to make substantial progress in our efforts to address the issues that we are entrusted with. Certainly the excellent arrangements made by our host as well as the traditional Thai hospitality and warmth have, in no small measure, contributed to the success of our deliberations.

Your Excellency,

The Joint Commission remains a viable mechanism to review the progress that has been made in bilateral relations as well as identify new areas of cooperation. Besides that, the meeting has provided an added opportunity to iron out problems that we have encountered in the past years, in a friendly and constructive manner. As I have pointed out in my opening statement, for some unavoidable reasons we were not able to convene a meeting of the Joint Commission since the last meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 1995. This did not, however, prevent both sides from undertaking numerous consultations not only at the level of the Prime Ministers and Ministers but also at official levels, for the benefit of our countries and peoples. Nevertheless, the Joint Commission Meeting is undoubtedly one of the important elements in the bilateral equation.

Your Excellency,

Despite the myriad of issues involving our two countries, I am happy to note that in the spirit of strong bonds of friendship and constructive cooperation, we were able to achieve appreciable progress on a number of issues that have impact on our bilateral relations. To name a few, the Land Boundary Committee, except for Bukit Jeli, have made commendable progress in resolving some of the critical issues relating to the longstanding border demarcation issues at Padang Besar and Sungai Golok. I am

confident that, given the sustained political will at the highest level, we would be able to resolve the remaining issues amicably. Both countries were also able to promote several significant cooperation efforts in the border areas among the various government agencies and local authorities of both countries. These efforts also include the recent relaxation of the currency control measures by Malaysia in order to revive active trading along the border areas.

Both countries are committed to expanding the bilateral trade relations. In this respect, Malaysia and Thailand have been actively exploring avenues for further cooperation that includes the concluding of a Bilateral Trade Agreement and a Bilateral Payment Arrangement.

The lifting of the restriction imposed by Malaysia relating to the movement in transit of perishable goods by road from Thailand through Malaysia to Singapore signifies Malaysia's firm commitment to the enhancement of commercial relations not only between Malaysia and Thailand but also the expansion of intra ASEAN trade in the spirit of ASEAN cohesiveness.

Most of the trade and investment issues in the region are now being discussed during the AFTA Forum. Thus any irritants that we may have bilaterally in these areas could be settled once the CEPT comes into force.

Your Excellency,

The establishment of the Malaysia-Thai and the Thai-Malaysia Associations could serve as platform for strengthening of relations at people's to people's level between both countries. I am also glad to note that the Terms of Reference for the establishment of the Human Resource Development Fund under the IMT-GT is been considered for conclusion by both governments. The fund, would facilitate the development of critical human resources in the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia and the Southern Province of Thailand.

Your Excellency,

The deliberations and decisions that have been adopted here testify to our commitment to continuously reinforce our bilateral ties with concrete actions in several areas of cooperation. We are meeting today at a crucial juncture in the history of our two countries where concerted attempts are being made by both our governments to extricate ourselves from the destructive forces of the global financial crisis. As destined to live as neighbours, we should therefore harness our relative strength, exploit our competitive edge and forge smart partnerships in order to achieve our common objectives.

Your Excellency,

The personal bonds of friendship and reservoir of goodwill that we have developed and forged in Bangkok would be useful in our future interaction and would certainly facilitate the future work of the Joint Commission. We will continue our informal deliberations in Phuket to chart the programmes and directions with which we would steer our bilateral relations for the next millennium.

Before concluding, allow me to express on behalf of the Malaysian delegate and on my own behalf, our sincere appreciation to Your Excellency, the Government of Thailand for the warm reception and generous hospitality accorded to us during our stay in Bangkok and for some of us in Phuket. The arrangements for this meeting have been excellent. My words of appreciation would not be complete if I do not commend the Secretariat as well as all the officials in both delegations for their dedication and hard work in making this meeting a success. I look forward to welcoming Your Excellency and the Thai delegation in Malaysia for the Ninth Joint Commission Meeting.

Thank you.